

# **Social planning for Canada**

THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE OF THE LEAGUE  
FOR SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION

**Chapter 19**

## **A Housing Program** **by Humphrey Carver**

**1935**

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## **Social Planning for Canada**

**League for Social Reconstruction**

Introduction by F.R. Scott, Leonard Marsh, Graham Spry,  
J.King Gordon, E.A. Forsey, and J.F. Parkinson

The League for Social Reconstruction was formed in 1932 to provide an analysis of the capitalist system and to define the social goal toward which political action should be directed. Early in its history the need was seen for a comprehensive book bringing together important pieces of individual research and spelling out in some detail a plan of social and political action based on the LSR Manifesto, the declaration of the League's principles and plan of action.

**Social Planning for Canada**, published in 1935, was the result of this perception and marked a turning point in Canadian political history. It was the first comprehensive democratic socialist book about Canada. The authors, who freely admitted their debt to Fabianism, provided a historical and critical survey of Canadian conditions and applied the ideas of planning and social democracy to the Canadian scene, attempting throughout to write in 'specifically Canadian terms.' The first part of the book surveys and analyses the economic system, documenting the LSR Manifesto statement that 'the present capitalist system has shown itself unjust and inhuman, economically wasteful, and a standing threat to peace and democratic government.' The longer part of the book, 'What Socialist Planning Really Means,' deals with the application of the principles and policies of social reconstruction.

**Social Planning for Canada** exerted great influence on policies and platforms of the CCF, and indirectly on those of the other parties. It is the most comprehensive study by the Canadian left of an economic and social alternative to Canadian capitalism.

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# **Social planning for Canada**

**THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE OF THE LEAGUE  
FOR SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION**

**UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS**

## FOREWORD

This volume is most timely. Never before have Canadians been forced to examine the very foundations of our present system. Canada is fortunate indeed to have among its "intellectuals" so many who are grappling seriously and fearlessly with our practical problems.

This L.S.R. book might be called, in commercial phrase, a "Pooled Product". To its preparation many specialists have contributed but throughout, there has been careful consultation and co-ordination. Facts gleaned from many sources, not readily accessible to the public, have been assembled within the compass of one volume so as to give a comprehensive survey of conditions in Canada.

The result is a rude jolt to the easy optimism which hitherto has characterized our youthful nation in this land of imagined unlimited opportunities. Further it is a telling indictment of the failures and contradictions of Capitalism. As such this book is surely a challenge alike to pioneer ideals and current business practices.

As we face the wide range of facts we cannot but realize the need, not of this or that particular "reform" but of a whole series of co-ordinated measures each forming part of a carefully worked-out plan. Socialism begins to emerge not as a dream—pleasant of bad—but as an urgent necessity.

Socialist literature has been scarce in Canada and for most people, unconvincing. The idealized pictures of Morris and Bellamy and Wells, while stimulating our imaginations carried with them a sense of unreality. The writings of the "Scientific Socialists" though keenly analytical were too abstract and left us cold. The devastating attacks on the evils of Capitalism by Upton Sinclair and Stuart Chase did not offer us any feasible way out. Information with regard to Soviet Russia was too heavily charged with propaganda and emotionalism to be of much service. The practical achievements of socialist efforts within a limited field in Great Britain, Vienna and the Scandinavian countries had been accomplished under conditions which differ widely from those existing in Canada. Even the excellent studies of the Fabian Society and the Socialist League do not altogether explain the Canadian situation or point out the next steps in the solution of our problems.

Now comes this first comprehensive treatise on Canadian economy from a socialist point of view. It is welcome to those of us who, through a new political organization, are seeking to establish a Co-operative Commonwealth in Canada.

While many subjects dealt with in this book have not been discussed either in the Conventions of the C.C.F. or by its National Council, and while confessedly there is room for considerable difference of opinion with regard to some of the proposals set forth, yet on the whole the book is undoubtedly in line with the Regina Manifesto. It should be of great service in the formulation of the future policies of the C.C.F.

We trust that every C.C.F. candidate and every Club will secure a copy. Every C.C.F. member ought to be able to give a reason for the faith that is in him.

J. S. WOODSWORTH

## PREFACE

This book is the result of group discussion and co-operative writing on the part of a number of individuals over the past three years. Shortly after the League for Social Reconstruction was formed in 1931 some of its members felt that, before any constructive steps could be taken in the building of a new social order out of our present Canadian capitalism, there would have to be a careful analysis of our available resources and present inadequacies, a frank shedding of all current political beliefs not based on these realities, and a complete readiness to propose whatever changes in our political and economic framework seem necessary for the attainment of greater equality and social justice among the mass of our population.

The writers of this book desire to see these changes accomplished by democratic and orderly means; but they believe also that if democracy is to be *real* it implies two necessities—complete freedom to criticise existing institutions, provided that factual grounds are given for this criticism; and a much more widespread public knowledge than we have at present of the faults and deficiencies of our economic system, and of the constructive proposals to deal with them which spring from socialist ideals. Politically and economically, socialism simply represents the endeavour to put governments *by the people* and *for the people* into modern terms; but the socialist case will be ineffective so long as it continues to be dismissed as "radical agitation" or "Utopian idealism" on the one hand, and confused with communism on the other. If socialism means a definite system or body of proposals, however, it also crystallizes a protest—against gross inequality of income and economic power, against poverty and thwarted and repressed human lives, against waste and inefficiency, against the inhumanity and social stupidity of exploitation and war. Above all else, this protest has the right to be heard.

Our book is an attempt to set out this protest and these proposals in specifically Canadian terms. It is not a series of doctrinaire generalizations, but an attempt to analyze and prescribe by a group who have tried to visualize a real and richer "Canada for Canadians". We do not pretend, of course, that a single volume can contain all the thinking required in this process. Parts of this book deal all too summarily with deep

problems; sheer limits of space have compelled us to omit such vital subjects as, for instance, education and the position of women in the new society. But we are hopeful that the material gathered here will be of assistance not only to those who are already acquainted with socialist thought, but to all those with sincere interest in the future of Canada who want to examine its problems realistically.

The book is a compilation from many contributions, so much so that no chapter has been the product of one hand alone. Inevitably, therefore, it lacks the uniformity of style which a single writer would have given it. Its production would not have been possible without assistance from many individuals besides those whose names appear at the end of this preface and who accept responsibility for the book as a whole. More than twenty men and women have offered memoranda, draft chapters, criticism and revision in the course of its preparation. Some of these, for personal reasons, do not wish their names to appear here but we take this opportunity of offering our thanks to them. Among those who have given valuable help and whom we include in our expression of thanks are: Miss Irene M. Biss, Prof. A. Brady, Mr. Humphrey Carver, Prof. G. M. A. Grube, Mr. Stuart Legge, Miss Betty Ratz, Prof. K. W. Taylor, and Prof. C. W. Topping. Of course no persons except the signers of this preface are to be held responsible for any opinions expressed in the book. We desire also to express our thanks to those members of the L.S.R. who have assisted in the work of proof-reading.

EUGENE FORSEY  
J. KING GORDON  
LEONARD MARSH

FRANK H. UNDERHILL

J. F. PARKINSON  
F. R. SCOTT  
GRAHAM SPRY

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## L.S.R.

### LEAGUE FOR SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION

*Honorary President: Mr. J. S. Woodsworth, M.P., Ottawa.*

*President: Professor F. R. Scott, Montreal.*

*Vice-President: Professor G. M. A. Grube, Toronto.*

*General Secretary: Mr. Graham Spry, Toronto.*

The League for Social Reconstruction was founded in 1932. It is an association of men and women who are convinced that the present economic order is unjust, cruel, wasteful and inefficient; who want to work for the establishment in Canada of a social order in which production, distribution and service will be organized for the common good rather than for private profit.

The L.S.R. is a national body, with headquarters in Toronto. It consists of a National Executive which exercises general control over the League's activities and is responsible for publications, and of local branches in different parts of the country. Such local branches may be organized wherever ten persons are prepared to accept the obligations of full membership. In addition, there are a number of individual members where no branch at present exists. Associate membership is open to all who are in general sympathy with the aims of the League but are not prepared to subscribe to the full platform as put down in the Manifesto: namely, the general principles of public ownership and control which are elaborated in this book.

The main aims of the L.S.R. are education and research: it strives to investigate our social and economic problems and to develop a body of well informed radical opinion in Canada by means of its own publications, by keeping its members informed of other books and pamphlets, by helping them to establish contacts with others working for the same goal, by lectures, broadcasts, meetings, discussions, study groups and other branch activities.

The L.S.R. is not affiliated with any political party, and has rejected the idea of such affiliation because it does not wish to make immediate political expediency its primary aim at any time. Many of its members, however, are engaged in active political work. Since the formation of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation such members are usually found within its ranks, as the only party that aims at translating the objects of the League into political realities. Relations between the C.C.F. and the L.S.R. have therefore always been cordial and mutually helpful.

For further information apply to: L.S.R., 449 Walmer Road, Toronto.

### PART I—THE PRESENT SYSTEM: SURVEY AND ANALYSIS.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## A HOUSING PROGRAMME.

## A. MAKING TOWN PLANNING A REALITY.

WHEN we come to the question of housing, the first essential is to approach it with imagination and breadth of view—not as the restricted problem of clearing our worst slum areas or even of providing cheap "working class houses", but of planning and building better the urban environment in which so great a proportion of Canadian citizens are born and live their daily lives.<sup>1</sup> If capitalism is judged by its ability to provide homes and cities which will produce free and healthy citizens, it will not stand high. An unrestrained system of profit-making enterprise is responsible not only for the arid wastes of city street and slum, rooming houses and "shack towns", inadequate provision of open spaces, playgrounds and community centres, but also for the vulgar ostentation or the mock-antique of many of our "high-class" residential districts, the crudities of our present civic architecture, the waste and graft of much of our public works development. Here too we must start from fundamentals.

*Urban Instability.*

The first of these is that the urban organism has no natural maturity. Human communities are alive and growing: the town is continually getting too big for its boots. Particularly in our chief commercial cities, no allowance has been made for this characteristic. From this two important results have followed:

(1) As the town spreads out into the surrounding country, land beyond the margin of building development has acquired a speculative value. Upon the person who holds this land has rested the great responsibility of planning it for public service. But much of this land is held not for actual use but in the hope of re-sale at a profit. These "interim" land-owners have naturally been influenced by the desire to make quick and profitable sales, and for this purpose have subdivided the land in ways which seemed to be of immediate advantage, regardless

<sup>1</sup> And of course of improving rural amenities also. The bulk of the present section is concerned with urban areas.

of the ultimate needs of the community. The ugly and short-sighted "grid plan" of street lay-out, the multiplication of small properties and unrelated building operations, the heavy financial investment involved in real estate constitute a system which has grown up almost solely for the benefit of the speculator; his operations, it is said, represent a tax on the eventual homeowner and a drain on the householder's resources in excess of all municipal, provincial and federal taxation put together. This speculation in real estate has subjected us to ridiculous land costs and has given us a city plan—or absence of plan—of a most inconvenient, expensive and undignified kind.

(2) As the town grows outwards and its total area increases, the proportions of all its natural parts have had to be continually adjusted to serve the increasing population. The expanding financial centre, for instance, has continually encroached upon the commercial area; the business section is continually devouring the older residential streets, while residential development is for ever encroaching upon the green countryside. This instability and periodic internal decay in the city has been a phenomenon as typical of capitalism as the periodic business depressions.

What are known as "blighted areas" are these districts which have been left behind by the out-growing suburbs; they are areas abandoned by the building industry, which prefers to concentrate on more profitable business amongst the well-to-do in the expanding suburbs. The domestic appointments of these large areas are more often than not out-of-date, but the capitalist employer who is ready enough to scrap obsolete machinery in his plant is not interested in the domestic equipment of his employees. What is known as a "slum" is really a property which the landlord, thinking that it can be sold soon at a good price to the outgrowing commercial section, does not bother to keep in repair; the landlord is prepared to accept a low rent with few responsibilities and await the harvest. Too often, and particularly during the last few years, the expected commercial expansion fails to materialize and the properties fall into worse and worse disrepair. The low rents attract the poorest and most destitute groups in the community: unable to meet rents elsewhere, they have to crowd into the sub-divided houses under the crumbling roofs of the slums and put up with conditions which violate all the principles of lighting, ventilation

and sanitation—to say nothing of personal freedom and the proper environment for growing children.

#### *Principles of Town Planning.*

Such, very briefly, is the nature of the modern city as we know it. Most of the problems of municipal administration, the heavy urban incidence of crime and disease, traffic congestion, lack of recreation facilities and decent housing accommodation, are directly related to this process of external expansion and internal decay. Organized town planning is the answer to this chaos of irresponsibility and waste. The central principle of town planning is to stabilize each section of the city for its appropriate use by recognizing and anticipating its normal growth. Systematic technical survey, backed by adequate compulsory powers, is obviously necessary to put this into practice. Town planning must be made a specific government responsibility in every large city, co-ordinated and encouraged through the Federal Housing (and Town Planning) Authority which would be set up at Ottawa.

As in designing a dwelling the basic factor in planning is the size of the family for whom accommodation must be provided, so in planning a town it is necessary to form a reasonable judgment of the future population. In Canada we have become so accustomed to a continual multiplication of our numbers that it is difficult to realize that our plans must provide, if not for a stationary condition, at least for only gradually growing populations in our cities.<sup>2</sup> Our aim should be therefore, not to plan for the gigantic cities which the "boosters" of fifteen years ago anticipated, but to perfect the use of our existing urban regions. We should call a halt to the premature sub-division of land. Many municipalities have been put into bankruptcy by overoptimistic capital expenditure on roads and other equipment, thus creating those desolate marginal lands that make the outskirts of our towns so hideous: the ribbon development of "shack towns" is a peculiarly Canadian form of slum which is no less demoralizing to its inhabitants and no less objectionable than the internal urban slum. We must halt the reckless outward expansion of the cities and surround them with green parks and better-equipped suburbs.

Such a revolution in municipal policy requires not only

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter II, d.

effective planning powers of a preventive nature but also an active stimulation of replanning and rebuilding in the interior of the city. As long as there remained new land to conquer for private profit, capital has been busy and expansive, but the task of remodelling the obsolete and blighted areas over which "enterprise" has already passed will only be begun through public initiative.

In this concept of deliberate control and development according to a comprehensive plan of zones and amenities, there is nothing startlingly new. All we need is the will to do it. We have the technicians, architects, surveyors, draughtsmen—many of the younger ones long graduated from our engineering faculties without having found the jobs for which they are trained. These are projects also which must enlist the goodwill as well as the skill of every engineer and architect who has some vision of what his profession could contribute to the community if it were unhampered by considerations of profit in private contracts and patronage or vested interests in public ones. We have an army of manual workers who could readily be marshalled for work on parks, roads, demolitions, grade-crossings, tree-planting and the host of other possible urban improvements, apart altogether from house and building construction itself. A complete regional survey of course takes time, but the need for much of the work of the type mentioned is obvious in so many places that undoubtedly it could be begun rapidly once the requisite authorities had been set up. The modernization of provincial and municipal building and health regulations—and the implementing of those regulations by really effective inspection—are necessary corollaries.

Town planning for the *whole* of a city's residents (instead of for its few wealthy areas) will only become a reality if the principles of land development are interpreted in future strictly in the public interest. Purely speculative enterprise which does not satisfy this test must be heavily taxed or otherwise prevented. Housing programmes have so long a history in Britain alone, that there is abundant and adequate experience to draw on in determining principles of equitable compensation and appropriation where re-allocation of existing land or building space is necessary. A real estate branch of the Court of Appraisal could also be appointed to assist in this task and would be particularly valuable as an arbitral authority.

#### B. HOUSING FOR THE WAGE EARNER.

Housing and slum clearance form one of the largest features of any "emergency programme", and town planning measures themselves are of course only the systematic setting for a new housing policy.

Here again every student of the subject must be struck by the difference between the great potential achievements, raising the standards of living and increasing the happiness of "the lower third" of our population, which could be accomplished in the field of housing, and the little that has actually been done in Canada. To argue the *need* for an active policy to provide better housing for the wage earner should be superfluous, in the face of its long and respectable history in Europe if for no other reason.<sup>2</sup>

#### *European Experience.*

In England some of the best experiments in planned housing are associated with the highly respectable names of Cadbury, Lord Leverhulme, Howard, and Chamberlain; while the greater part of the 1,400,000 dwellings erected in Great Britain with state aid since the war were in fact erected under a Conservative government. In Germany the construction of houses by the State has been accepted as an altogether logical expression of civic pride. The great Vienna housing scheme, and some of the less spectacular but even more successful Scandinavian housing developments, are of course more directly socialist enterprises. But a great part of the four and a half-million state-aided houses built in Europe since the war bear the mark of Conservative respectability.

The principle has been thoroughly established: the differences are those of standards, finance, and energy. It is interesting to note the chairman of a recent English Housing Commission observing that the whole enterprise must be regarded "as a kind of crusade", and that even under the most favourable conditions a housing programme requires continual and unremitting toil to outbalance the inherent selfishness and obstructionism of private capital and commercial interests. The Commission stated that it must be regarded as a public service and a national responsibility to provide a million new houses in England at rents of \$2.50 per week and under, the building of which should

<sup>2</sup>Of., however, the sections "Where Canadians Live" and "What Canadians Think of Their Homes" in Chapter I, for a commentary based only on Canadian facts.

be organized on a ten-year programme following upon a national survey of housing needs, a long-term organization of labour and materials, and stimulated technical research. To accomplish this it proposed to finance local authorities and public utilities at trustee rates of interest. In Britain there are plenty of examples of both local authorities and private "limited-profit" housing corporations which have shown a high sense of responsibility in taking advantage of such a policy. But even there it is generally admitted that the success of a housing programme depends on the "drive" which emanates from the central government.

#### *A Federal Housing Authority to Provide Low-Cost Housing.*

In Canada it is clear that the problem of providing housing for the lower-paid worker will only be met through a Federal Housing Authority which takes its responsibilities seriously and directly. Our experience after 1921 with subsidized housing on a delegated and ill-supervised basis demonstrated conclusively that any hopes that those of our city workers most in need of better houses (i.e., those with the smallest incomes) will benefit from any similarly-conceived schemes are foredoomed to failure.<sup>4</sup> The Federal Housing Authority which we propose would essentially give detailed attention to building standards, and would authorize federal grants only on the strict condition of these standards being met.

What is even more important, however, if we are to put current housing proposals and building schemes to the test, is their "financial base". If room is still to be left for private profit, or "remunerative investment", or if "the principles of orthodox finance" are to be followed, there will be no houses at really low rents, no attack on the roots of the slum problem through the provision of better alternative housing at the same rents at all. Even at the lowest obtainable rates of interest it is impossible to build houses of an acceptable standard which can be rented at rates within the low-wage worker's capacity to pay. And until they are built, he has to stay in the slum or something approaching it. The recent Toronto Housing Report showed that only one-third of the costs of workers' dwellings could be covered by a 4 per cent. loan and that the remaining two-thirds would have to be met by direct grants from the State, municipal, provincial and federal. This cal-

<sup>4</sup>Oif. Lieutenant Governor's Report (Ontario): *Housing Conditions in Toronto*.

culation was based on a rental of about \$20 a month, which would be an appropriate amount for a householder to pay when he is earning 50 cents an hour for a 40 hour week throughout the year. Since the typical slum-dweller under present earning conditions should not pay more than \$10 a month in rent, on the above basis the housing equation—on "orthodox" lines—does not admit of a solution.

These facts—the large proportion of our city workers who because of low wages, irregular employment, or unemployment, are unable to pay more than this small rent—and their bearing on the slum problem, are brought out even more forcibly in the Montreal housing report:

"The problem is to secure an adequate supply of housing accommodation at low rentals. It may of course be suggested that the wage earners concerned should devote more of their incomes to the payment of rent. The answer must be, however, that they can do so only at the cost of raising other social problems. To spend more than \$120.00 or so of an income of \$600.00 on rent, means sooner or later some curtailment or deprivation of food and fuel, and certainly of clothing, minor luxuries, and recreational expenditures. The provision of low rental housing tends to reduce under-nourishment, tuberculosis, hospitalization, destitution, with their attendant social costs, and to release working class purchasing power for the other necessities, comforts, and conveniences of life.

It may be objected that housing at such rents cannot economically speaking be provided—that these minimum rents will not cover the costs. But this again is the essence of the Housing Problem. There is a point at which private enterprise working on ordinary commercial lines cannot provide for certain groups of the community. The figures above suggest clearly that the unskilled and lowest paid wage-earners, and at least some proportion of the intermediate and skilled workers, are within these groups. . . ."

". . . It does not help to put forward schemes for slum clearance with replacement of dwellings renting at . . . \$20 (a month). Proposals of such character cannot be recommended because they do not relieve government and society of the burden of the slums. They can only bring about a slum elsewhere, or else deprive industry of those lower ranks of labour which should find housing at . . . \$10 (a month) within reach of their work".<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Report on Housing and Slum Clearance for Montreal (Mar. 1935), p. 35.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

This is clear enough—and it means that the recent Housing Bill of the Conservative Government will do nothing for the slums. For the fine-sounding \$10,000,000 appropriation which it authorizes is merely a loan fund, providing one-fifth of the capital to be used (whether by individuals or corporations) for building schemes. These individuals or corporations must themselves put up the remaining four-fifths of the capital and pay the government 5 per cent. on their "subsidy". Obviously none of the individuals will be slum-dwellers, and the corporations—unless they are going to be benevolent institutions operating at a loss for the benefit of the public—will be hard put to it on this basis to provide housing at even "white-collar" rentals. Even a less miserly policy which provided for the *expenditure* of \$10,000,000 as a direct subsidy, however, could hardly raise high hopes while loan companies or other corporations which "are not in business for their health" are chosen as the media.

A socialist government honestly desiring to get rid of slums and to provide better housing for the wage-earner (and also for the farmer) must expect to spend money for that purpose. In *national accounting*, whether an investment "pays" or not must be judged by its total social benefits. If devoting some part of the budget to subsidized housing "pays" in healthier and happier living conditions for many of the country's workers, in less repressive environments for their children, in reduced burdens of infantile mortality, tuberculosis, juvenile delinquency, contagious diseases, this is "profitable" expenditure in the best sense of the word. One of the first steps to be taken by the government must therefore be a large-scale housing programme frankly intended to provide *wage earners' houses*.

The housing estates created under this policy will not be farmed out to private corporations, but will be owned by the federal, provincial, or municipal government or their agents, the choice depending on what is most effective in the particular local circumstances. Each district or block will also have its estate-manager, an official (often a woman) combining the functions of business manager and social worker of the type whose development has contributed so much to the success of the best managed housing schemes in Britain.

While housing and slum clearance must be begun in the first instance as a frankly subsidized venture (though this is not to mean it will tolerate undue costs from attempts to hold up the government through extortionate land prices or monop-

olicistic prices of materials), reliance does not have to be placed permanently on this policy. The two important factors in the housing equation are rent and cost of construction. As the reconstruction and socialization of industry begins to take effect, one of its results will be a rise in the wage earner's standard of living and consequently in the scale of rent he can afford. Even more can be hoped, however, from reduction in the costs of construction.

Part of the high cost of housing comes of course from elements in the present economic system itself. But in the government's programme the "rake-off" of promoters' profits would be automatically eliminated. The obstacles of the monopolistic production of building supplies or, in some fields, the wastes of monopolistic competition, might be more serious. But with the threat of nationalization of non-co-operative industries at its command, it is reasonable to expect that the government could secure its supplies at terms equitably covering only their true production- and wage-costs. Over and above this, however, it is reasonable to expect that even basic production costs can be reduced—that the technique of mass-production can be turned towards the objective of low cost housing more directly than it is at present.

To achieve this it is necessary to apply to the design and construction of homes the same scientific rationalization that has been applied, for instance, to automobile plants; to reduce the costs of fabrication and assembly so that modern living conditions may become the normal possession of every householder. Standardized units can only be produced at a basic mass production cost provided that the output is sufficiently large, but this is precisely what a national housing policy—both urban and rural—would permit. The standardization of equipment such as metal windows, doors, kitchen cupboards, plumbing and heating would enable them to be installed as prefabricated articles; the standardization of wall-slab units with insulation would enable them to be assembled by unskilled labour; and so forth. One of the tasks of the Federal Housing Authority would be to institute (in co-operation with the Bureau of Standards if necessary) a codification of local building by-laws so as to take advantage of these advances in technique. In short, both by the accumulation of such economies and by the elimination of selling expenses, construction costs would be reduced well below the accepted normal. Labour saving methods in this

field would be brought into operation to serve that very part of the community which has been accustomed—often by hard experience—to think of mass production methods as a menace to employment.

*Urban Surveys.*

A factor of the very greatest importance in economical housing is the stability which results from fitting a housing scheme into a comprehensive town-planning scheme. In the interests of economy a number of municipal politicians have advocated the allotment of city funds for repairing slum dwellings; but although such work may temporarily relieve distress, it is a classic example of misdirected economy and such an allotment represents a total loss to the city. A similar fund, however, used in the development of one unit of a planned housing scheme remains a permanent asset to the community. It is as unwise as ever it was to put new wine into old bottles; a repaired slum still remains a slum.

The plan of campaign of the agencies co-operating with the Federal Housing Authority must be formulated after careful survey of actual conditions in each city. This implies an analysis of the areas given over to industry, commerce, retail business, etc., and these must be considered in relation to existing slums, blighted areas, and the expanding residential sections. In addition there is required a plan of the main traffic system, the park system, the educational and institutional centres and special topographical features such as rivers, ravines and beaches. On a zoning-map made on this basis the defects of the urban composition become apparent, and the town-planner with the co-operation of sociologist and economist is able to decide which are the areas most appropriate for housing schemes.

It is not to be assumed that the areas at present occupied by slums are necessarily the logical sites for housing a large population of low-income families; for the deteriorated property which marks the slum owes its existence to circumstances quite irrelevant to their residential qualifications. Central slum areas in fact have high land-values, because their *commercial* development—rightly or wrongly—is anticipated. The establishment of proper zoning regulations of course goes part of the way to removing these inconsistencies and uncertainties. If an area is scheduled to remain residential land for a specified period

its value will automatically drop to residential levels. But the higher value of central areas is bound to remain in some degree; and it must be assumed also that some proportion of the workers resident in slum areas are living there in order to be close to their work and will not therefore wish to move. The replacement of demolished slums by some re-housing must therefore be part of the immediate programme. The land for this purpose must be acquired by the government, and the compensation for it must be based on a reasonable compromise between its (possibly fictitious) commercial value and its actual earning-power as a residential area. On the lines of established British practice, however, no compensation should be allowed for property deteriorated beyond a certain standard.

For a really comprehensive programme the relatively high land costs typical of slum property are not necessarily the drawback they may at first seem. Advantage may be taken of the two facts, that land decreases in value the farther its location from the centre, but that also there is still a wide market for the better housing of the higher paid wage earners and many middle class groups, who are willing and able to pay higher rents and for whom the factors of distance and travel are of less consequence. Hitherto the profits from housing the well-to-do have gone to the particular group of owners and builders catering for this class of tenant, while housing provision for small wage earners has had to stand on its own feet. But governmental housing corporations should be free to build and operate housing in "middle" and "outer" or suburban areas as well as former slum districts where costs are too great for the private capitalist. And with this development there should be definite scope for some balancing of surpluses and deficits on the different types of property operated by the one authority.

It is of significance that the earliest experiments in workers' housing in England such as Bourneville and Welwyn proved so attractive that the homes have come to be occupied by a more well-to-do class than that for which they were intended. Yet these in fact were the practical laboratories in which some of the early experiments in working-class housing were undertaken. Since the reconstruction of our economic system is compelled to pass through a transitional period, this principle may well be adopted for our own use and extended. Housing authorities should be under no obligation to confine their activities to clearing the slums, but should be enabled to explore other fields

not hampered by the same rental disabilities. Besides enabling research and experiment to be carried out with greater freedom this would enable governments to build up a valuable equity in well-planned revenue-producing neighbourhoods. This in fact is the normal development of housing in a co-operative economic system.

*Housing Types and Standards.*

Outside the slum area at least, socialist housing plans could be built up on the principle of what may be called the "Neighbourhood Unit". This is a community or group of dwellings which together with their local services, such as a school, recreation centre, theatre, library and local retail stores, can be considered as a self-contained region. The size of such a community may be conveniently fixed as a neighbourhood large enough to require a school and should be from 100 to 150 acres in extent. Statistics show what are the typical requirements of such a community, the typical proportions of families and single residents, etc.: and with such information the town-planner is able to apportion areas of open space and building sites. The neighbourhood streets should be clearly distinguished from the traffic arteries which pass outside its boundary and which take its inhabitants to work and to the open country, so that children going to school and housewives going to the stores will not have to cross a traffic street.

There are many types of housing each of which can be experimented with to find its appropriate use. At the present time considerable research is being undertaken in both Europe and America, and it is unwise to have preconceived ideas on the subject while we are in a transitional period. In general, apartment houses or "flats" are suited for mid-urban estates and the single dwelling type for suburban and rural use. It is said that there is a prejudice in this country against apartment houses, at least among wage-earners; but this objection is commonly found to be raised by workers who have not lived in a really modern block of flats—and who are often also the victims of a conspiracy between the real estate and speculative building interests to persuade the public that there is some remarkable virtue in home-ownership. If the ultimate ideal really is the single dwelling on its own plot of land a few experiments should determine this. But in the larger city at least there are remarkable advantages in the multi-storey type of housing, a type

which is advocated by those who have given the most study to the matter and who have carried out the greatest amount of constructive work. A housing block of several floors permits the highest degree of standardization and economy in the assembly of mass-production materials; it promotes great efficiency and economy in services such as heating, conditioned air, refuse collection, etc.: it makes communal equipment such as laundries and creches much more accessible; it offers scope for the social services of the "estate manager"; it liberates more land for open space and allows the planner to give the greatest number of dwelling units an ideal orientation. Since all these advantages represent real wealth to the householder and his wife, too much attention must not be given to the somewhat sentimental objections which have been raised against life in multiple dwellings.

In the dwelling unit itself, certain standards may be set up for families of various sizes. These should take account of the separation of the sexes for children's bedroom accommodation and of proportionate sizes of living room and kitchen, the whole unit being subjected to the best technical analysis available to provide through-ventilation, light, and correct sanitation, and to reduce the labour of housekeeping. Several types may be evolved as suitable for a Canadian standard of living and these will serve as patterns when plans are made, to conform to the specific conditions of actual sites. Standards of bedroom accommodation will of course vary with size of family: but given proper ventilation, bedrooms may nowadays be reduced to 100 square feet, all additional space permitted by costs being given over to the living room. In multi-storey blocks attention can be given to the design of balcony-porches which are consistent with complete privacy. In general, the mechanization of household equipment and the economy of bedroom space to be cleaned would help to liberate the housewife from the monotonous servitude of domestic chores and allow her to develop family life in more fruitful directions. This liberation, together with the land economies of multi-storey blocks which permit dwellings to be set amidst the space and air of parkland, offers for the ordinary wage earner—who so far has been accorded little indeed of the improvements of which modern housing technique is capable—a veritable renaissance of urban life.